
HOUSING



Figure 24: Housing in the process of rehabilitation. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

Who lives in Over-the-Rhine and what type of housing is available in the neighborhood have been the most controversial issues throughout this planning process. The vision of creating a truly sustainable mixed-income neighborhood that serves as a model for years to come is the goal; one that has not often been achieved. There are many examples of neighborhoods across the nation that have never been able to overcome the kinds of poverty and disinvestment that OTR has experienced. There are also neighborhoods that, once begun, the cycle of re-investment has not been able to hold a meaningful place for low-income residents. The recommendations that follow are designed to create a neighborhood where people of all economic, racial, and ethnic groups have a significant, respectful place in the community.

These recommendations have been forged at a very difficult time in this community. Over the course of the planning process there was:

- significant civil unrest,
- a major operator of the site-based section eight program “opted out” of almost 900 units of restricted income housing,
- a neighborhood development corporation was dismantled and left many residents questioning their housing, and
- a major new piece of legislation around poverty impaction changed how the City funds projects.

The fact that these major events in the life of this neighborhood have been taking place and the Steering Committee has been able to continue to meet and develop the following recommendations is truly a testament to this neighborhood and the commitment of its residents and other stakeholders.

The three key housing objectives identified in the OTR planning process were the ability to:

- Stimulate new investment in market rate and affordable housing (rental and homeownership)
- Maintain homes for low-income residents
- Protect and preserve the historical, architectural and cultural heritage of OTR

Housing Capacity

In 1900, the population of OTR reached its highest population of 44,475. Over the following years, the population slowly declined to nearly half that amount by 1960. In that year, 27,577 people lived in OTR and there were 10,885 housing units. Due to current building codes and both the need and the desire for a more comfortable, spacious living environment, it is not desirable to try to recreate that kind of density.

Four indicators were examined to determine a feasible housing capacity for OTR: 1) existing habitable units; 2) renovation of vacant buildings; 3) development of vacant land; and 4) conversion of commercial, industrial and institutional buildings to residential uses.

We can start from the premise that we want to maintain the **existing 5,200 habitable units** (most in some need of renovation). The pool of available housing options can be increased through renovating vacant buildings and developing vacant lots for housing.

As indicated earlier, there are approximately 500 **vacant residential buildings** in the neighborhood. These buildings originally included a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 20 housing units. The units were small and often composed of multiple small rooms. For today's purposes, if we assume that each building could contain between one

and four units, there would be capacity for an average of an additional 1,250 (a range of 497 to 1,988) units created in existing vacant buildings.

The **vacant land** inventory identified approximately 700 vacant parcels in the neighborhood. If those vacant parcels provided for even 200 building sites with one to two units each, there is the capacity for another 300 units of new construction.

Conversion of large institutional and commercial buildings for housing is also a possibility. This is the most difficult capacity question to estimate. Projects like Hale-Justis and the Emery Center Apartments have recently provided 92 new units in buildings not historically used for housing. Potential vacant school buildings, various vacant churches and old commercial buildings are likely to be used as housing locations in the future.

Based on the many assumptions provided above, it is reasonable to consider the neighborhood has the capacity for approximately 7,200 housing units. At an average household size of 2.1, these 7,200 units could house a population of over 15,100 people, which would more than double the current population and be similar to the neighborhood's population of 15,025 in 1970's.¹

Proposed Housing Capacity	
Habitable Units	5,200
Renovation of Vacant Buildings	1,250
New Construction	300
Conversion	500
Total	7,250

Figure 25: Proposed Housing Capacity.

¹ In 1970, OTR had a population of 15,025, a decline of about 54% from 1960.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of challenges associated with increasing and enhancing the housing stock to reach the capacity stated above. Among these challenges is the creation of a mechanism that will allow for the retention and/or improvement of housing for current residents, while attracting new residents and businesses to the community. The combination of homeownership, recent changes in Section 8 policies, the large number of vacant and condemned buildings, housing types, and the various interests of residents and stakeholders in OTR creates significant opportunities and heightens these challenges.

Homeownership

OTR is today a neighborhood of renters with a current homeownership rate of less than 5%, which is considerably lower than the approximately 38% homeownership rate for the City of Cincinnati. The low rate of homeownership in OTR is due in part to the neighborhood's small percentage of single- and two-family residences. Attached and semi-attached three- to five-story mixed-use rowhouses and apartment buildings represent the dominant building type in OTR. Ownership of multiple properties by a single entity and real estate speculation has also served to maintain OTR as a primarily rental neighborhood. One of the main objectives of this plan is to increase homeownership in OTR for people of all income levels.



Figure 26: Single family residences on 14th Street.

As indicated earlier in this chapter the population of OTR and the total number of available housing units has declined steadily since 1900. The number of renter-occupied and vacant units has also increased concurrently. For example, between 1970 and 2000, the total number of housing units in OTR dropped 28%. During that same period, the percentage of renter-occupied units increased dramatically, as did the percentage of vacant housing units. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, approximately 96% of OTR's occupied units were rental, and OTR had over 1,600 vacant housing units (see Figure 27). Stakeholders in the community agree that this trend must be reversed and homeownership must be encouraged for current and future residents.

Housing Occupancy in Over-The-Rhine					
Census Year	Total Housing Units	Vacant Housing Units	Total Occupied Units	Owner-Occupied Units*	Renter-Occupied Units*
1970	7,312 (100%)	1,491 (20.4%)	5,821 (79.6%)	255 (3.5%)	5,566 (76%)
1980	6,386 (100%)	1,517 (23.8%)	4,869 (76.2%)	190 (3.9%)	4,671 (95.9%)
1990	5,087 (100%)	1,306 (25.7%)	3,781 (74.3%)	116 (3.1%)	3,665 (96.9%)
2000	5,261 (100%)	1,667 (31.7%)	3,594 (68.3%)	140 (3.9%)	3,454 (96.1%)

* = Number and percentage of owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units based on the total number of occupied units.

** = Figures for 1980 are approximate since eight housing units were not specifically identified as vacant, owner-occupied, or renter-occupied.

Figure 27: Housing Occupancy in OTR.

The wide spectrum of building sizes and types in OTR presents the opportunity for a variety of homeownership options, from single-family homes to condominiums. Pockets of owner-occupied residences have grown up on Spring, Broadway, E. 14th and Orchard Streets in the southeast quadrant of the community. The buildings on these streets tend to be smaller detached and semi-detached structures, two- or three-stories in height, which are conducive to single-family occupancy. Other areas with opportunities for single-family homeownership include: The east ends of 12th and 13th Streets; Hughes, Republic, Race, Pleasant and Elm Streets north of Washington Park; and Pleasant, Elm and Green Streets near Findlay Market.

Larger buildings throughout the neighborhood also offer the possibility of homeownership through condominiums. For example, the Emery Center Apartments, formerly the Ohio Mechanics Institute/ College of Applied Science, could convert to condominiums sometime around 2006². Narrow four- and five-story commercial buildings in OTR with open floor plates and high ceilings could be developed with one condominium per floor, while more expansive former breweries, light industrial and commercial buildings allow for even larger projects with multiple condominium units and various layouts on each floor. Another option for larger buildings is for an owner to purchase and live in an on-site unit while renting out additional housing units.

² The Emery Center Apartments are located in the Over-the-Rhine National Register District and is therefore eligible for Federal Historic Tax Credits. Receipt of the tax credits requires the project to be income producing for five years.

Section 8 Contracts

In 2000, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) replaced their long-term site-based Section 8 contracts (ranging from 20 to 30 years) for year-to-year contracts. Once the existing long-term contracts expire, owners throughout the United States must decide either to enter into a one-year agreement or to “opt out” of the program. If an owner decides to opt-out, the current tenants are given a portable voucher. This voucher can be used to subsidize the rent for either their current home or, if they choose to leave, the rent in a new location throughout the country.

This is a significant change in the way HUD will administer its Section 8 Program. HUD intends to place financial subsidy with individuals rather than housing providers. The intention of this shift is to allow benefit recipients to secure housing in the private market in less concentrated locations than in site-based project areas that tend to concentrate households in poverty.



Figure 28: The Emery Center Apartments on Central Parkway.

The change in Section 8 contracts will have both short- and long-term impacts on rent-restricted housing in the OTR community. Already, nearly 2,000 of the site-based Section 8 unit contracts with HUD have expired and tenants have been given portable vouchers. Within the next five years, all of the long-term contracts with HUD in OTR will expire. Based on the limited data available, about 60% of tenants whose landlords opted out of Section 8 chose to stay in their current residence. The remaining 40% of tenants elected to take their vouchers and move either to another neighborhood in Cincinnati or to an entirely different locale, or did not qualify for a voucher. The shift in HUD’s Section 8 contracts, which provides for a portable voucher, could result in a substantial number of residents choosing to leave the area, further reducing the neighborhood’s population and possibly increasing the number of vacant buildings. Another concern expressed by neighborhood advocates is that rent-restricted housing, once provided in project-based Section 8 buildings, is at risk of no longer being available for those who need subsidized housing. The bankruptcy of Hart Realty, the largest property owner in OTR, certainly points to problems that housing providers are having in making the switch in programs.

Costs of Producing Housing

The current market does not support the full costs of the work required to bring the housing stock up to current housing codes. This is in part due to long-term neglect by speculators, vandalism, the age of the housing stock, the configuration of units (too small), lead abatement and outdated building systems. The infrastructure needs to be refreshed with attractive lighting, trees and landscaped parking. Cincinnati also has a comparatively affordable housing market and many choose to live in new or already renovated homes rather than restore one of OTR's historic gems. For years, only the most committed urbanites and developers worked to create housing in the community.

Opportunity abounds in OTR where numerous properties, sometimes on adjacent parcels, are for sale and/or vacant. Speculators have bought and continue to buy buildings in OTR, waiting for the payoff a notable rise in market value represents. Non-profit organizations including ReSTOC, Over-the-Rhine Housing Network and Mercy Franciscan Home Development, Inc. are engaged in rehabilitating and/or building affordable housing units throughout the neighborhood. Market-rate and private developers such as Urban Sites Property Management, Middle Earth, and River City Alpine Development Group have also undertaken various small and large housing projects in OTR, and their interest appears to be growing. Based on current figures new and rehabilitated units in the neighborhood are slowly approaching the rent levels necessary to make projects financially viable. In fact, a few recent developments have met or been able to exceed their projected rents. However, despite a growing market and the availability of gap funding through the Urban Living Loan Pool, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Federal Historic Tax Credits and low-interest loans and grants through the City, residential development in OTR is still far from an easy proposition.

Figures 29 and 30: Renovation can be time consuming and costly when working with historic structures. The interior of a building at 1410 Walnut Street during renovation. Photos courtesy of Urban Sites Property Management.



The vast majority of vacant buildings in OTR require modest to major stabilization measures due to a combination of neglect, exposure to the elements and vandalism. Upgrading electrical and plumbing systems that do not meet code and the abatement of hazardous materials required by both Federal and state law adds another layer of costs to projects in OTR. The narrow floor plates of the rowhouses that characterize many of the neighborhood's streets pose an additional challenge. Homeowners and renters now expect and/or need larger living spaces – big rooms, spacious closets, multiple bathrooms – with amenities not generally found in nineteenth century buildings – off-

street parking, central air and laundry facilities. On the positive side, since each building is different, developers can create and market unique interior layouts. At the opposite end of the spectrum, architects and/or engineers often must be hired to design solutions. Pre-development loans and funding to determine the exact condition of a building and the feasibility of a project are exceptionally difficult to obtain. The Cincinnati Development Fund is one of the few organizations that will consider pre-development loans. For these reasons development in OTR poses a financial risk for many private and non-profit developers.



As the revitalization of OTR continues, the community's non-profit housing developers (Appendix C) will become valuable in ensuring the continued availability of affordable housing. The desires of property owners and renters are typically in conflict. Owners want to see a return on their investment in the form of increased property values. Renters prefer property values and thus their monthly rent to remain stable. New development and rehabilitation of existing buildings in OTR brings with it a corresponding rise in property values and rents. The result may be the displacement of current residents who cannot afford the increased rent. It is unlikely that private landlords, speculators and market-rate developers not involved in an affordable housing initiative will maintain affordable rents for existing residents on a long-term basis. Incentives and controls must be in place to ensure that revitalization of the neighborhood does not occur at the expense of current residents.

Figures 31 and 32: A before and after photo of the interior of 1431 Walnut Street. Photo courtesy of Urban Sites Property Management.

Housing Affordability

The long-term affordability of the housing stock in OTR, both for homeownership and for rental housing, is an issue as the neighborhood progresses. As a general principle, housing is considered affordable if no more than 30% of income is spent on housing, although many families pay more than this, especially when utilities are included, when there is only one breadwinner, or when incomes are low or fixed.

Using HUD data for **rental housing**, the following table shows the income needed to support various rental-housing types at Fair Market Rent (FMR):

Fair Market Rent – Cincinnati, Ohio ³		
Type of Unit	FMR including utilities	Family Income
One Bedroom	\$430	\$17,200 (\$8.27/hr)
Two Bedroom	\$576	\$23,040 (\$11.08/hr)
Three Bedroom	\$772	\$30,800 (\$14.85/hr)

Figure 33: Fair Market Rent in Cincinnati.

Stated another way, a family that has income of \$17,500 can afford a monthly rent for a one bedroom including utilities of \$430. A minimum wage earner can afford a rent including utilities of no more than \$268 a month. In Ohio, in the last two years, the wage increase needed to afford a two bedroom home went up 12.57%, much faster than inflation, from \$10.10 to \$11.37 an hour.

Regarding **homeownership**, banks generally do not want overall debt (including housing costs but not including utilities) to exceed 40% of income when considering underwriting loans for mortgages.

³ Projected 2002 FMR figures for Cincinnati, Ohio obtained from the National Low Income Housing Coalition.



Figure 34: A house on Mercer Street that is prime for redevelopment.



Figure 35: An example of housing located above commercial uses on Main Street.

Using the 30% affordability principle but without utilities, persons of moderate income may be able to purchase a home. The numbers below are approximate.

The following chart will provide a guide as to what low to moderate-income families might be able to be approved for a mortgage loan if their overall debt does not exceed 40% of their gross incomes and with a 5% down payment. If debt exceeds 40%, the money available for housing costs will decrease, so the price of the home one can afford goes down.

Homeownership Guide For Low- And Moderate-Income Families (Based on an 8% Interest Rate)				
HH Income Annual or Hourly Full Time	Available for Housing Costs Monthly (PITI ⁴)	Other Debt Monthly	5% Down Payment	Maximum Price of Home
\$20,730 (\$10/hr.)	518.25 (30%)	\$172.75 (10%)	\$3,000	\$60,000
\$27,100 (\$13/hr.)	\$677.66 (30%)	\$225.83 (10%)	\$4,000	\$80,000
\$33,500 (\$16/hr.)	\$697.92 (25%)	418.75 (15%)	\$4,250	\$82,000
\$41,900 (\$20/hr.)	\$803.08 (23%)	600.00 (17%)	\$4,750	\$95,000
\$41,500 (\$20/hr.)	\$1036.49 (30%)	\$345.83 (10%)	\$6,000	\$120,000

Figure 36: Homeownership guide for low and moderate income families.

⁴ Principal, Interests, Taxes and Insurance

City's Involvement

In past years, city funding has been allocated for completed rehabilitation projects or for projects currently under construction in OTR. The city also allocates money for emergency repairs for low-income homeowners, for receivership projects and for site control for properties in OTR needing redevelopment.

A balanced approach achieved an almost equal split in the number of units with City funding in OTR with rent restricted and market rate units. The public cost per unit has been higher for the market rent units than the affordable units, due to other sources available for development of affordable units, such as state funding and low income housing tax credits. The use of Historic Tax Credits for developers of rental housing and commercial projects is encouraged.

The average public investment in OTR has been \$19,500 per unit in loans, flexible loans and grants. Rental investments come in the form of loans and flexible loans. Funding provided for homeownership is generally in the form of grants.



Figure 37: Two city-funded housing projects - the Hale-Justis building (on the far left) and the Emery Center Apartments (on the far right). Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.



Figure 38: Housing in Sharp Village developed by the OTR Housing Network.

Market-rate housing advocates would like to capitalize on the historical and cultural assets of OTR. The neighborhood includes a vibrant arts community and is home to many of the City's cultural institutions such as the Ensemble Theatre, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and the Cincinnati Opera. It also has become the center for a growing number of internet and computer-related businesses. The proximity of OTR to the Central Business District is also attractive to many. For these reasons and many others, market-rate developers consider OTR an ideal location for diverse housing including rowhouses, lofts, and condominiums.

Neighborhood Interests

The housing interests that will have a major impact on the housing stock in OTR for years to come range from advocates for the homeless and low-income residents to market rate housing developers. The non-profit housing developers and low-income advocates want OTR to remain a neighborhood that provides housing for its low-income residents while recognizing that a mixed-income community is economically beneficial. Primarily, their focus has been on ensuring equitable spending throughout the neighborhood and for a "no-net-loss of affordable housing." In addition, many advocates place strong emphasis on increasing the quality of life for low-income individuals by providing improved housing through rental placements and homeownership opportunities. Many of the residents expressed their desire for homeownership opportunities, residential rehabilitation, new development and resident management opportunities.

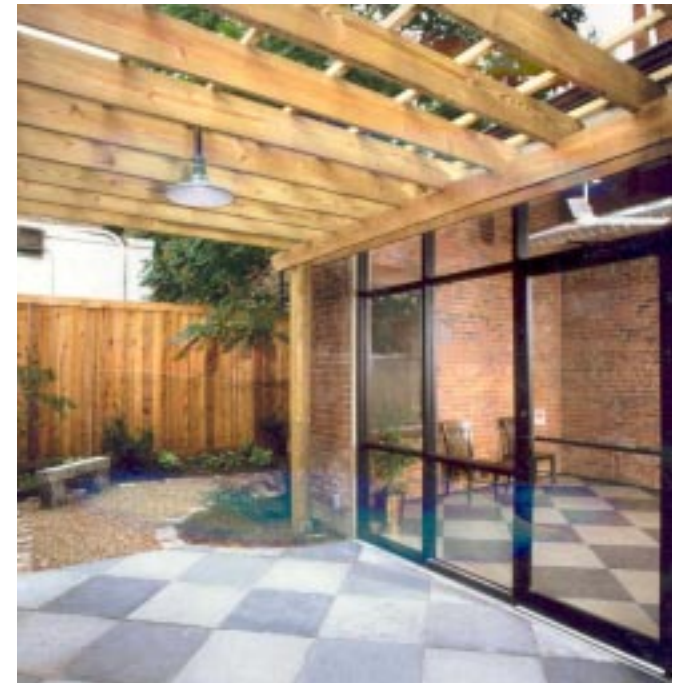


Figure 39: An outdoor patio at a building rehabilitated by Urban Sites Property Management. Photo courtesy of Urban Sites Property Management.

HOUSING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Encourage and welcome new investment at all levels of the housing market and ensure the long-term sustainability of enough affordable housing to house current residents

Objectives:

- Protect current residents
- Encourage new residents
- Improve the production of housing at all income levels
- Preserve and strengthen all residential sub areas through equitable distribution of resources
- Increase financial resources and support for low-income special-needs housing including shelters, temporary and transitional housing
- Increase financial resources for the creation of market-rate housing
- Stimulate the use of abandoned, underused and substandard buildings in OTR
- Remove the bureaucratic and institutional barriers to housing production
- Increase new homeownership opportunities

Goal 2: Provide appropriate housing-related services for all residents

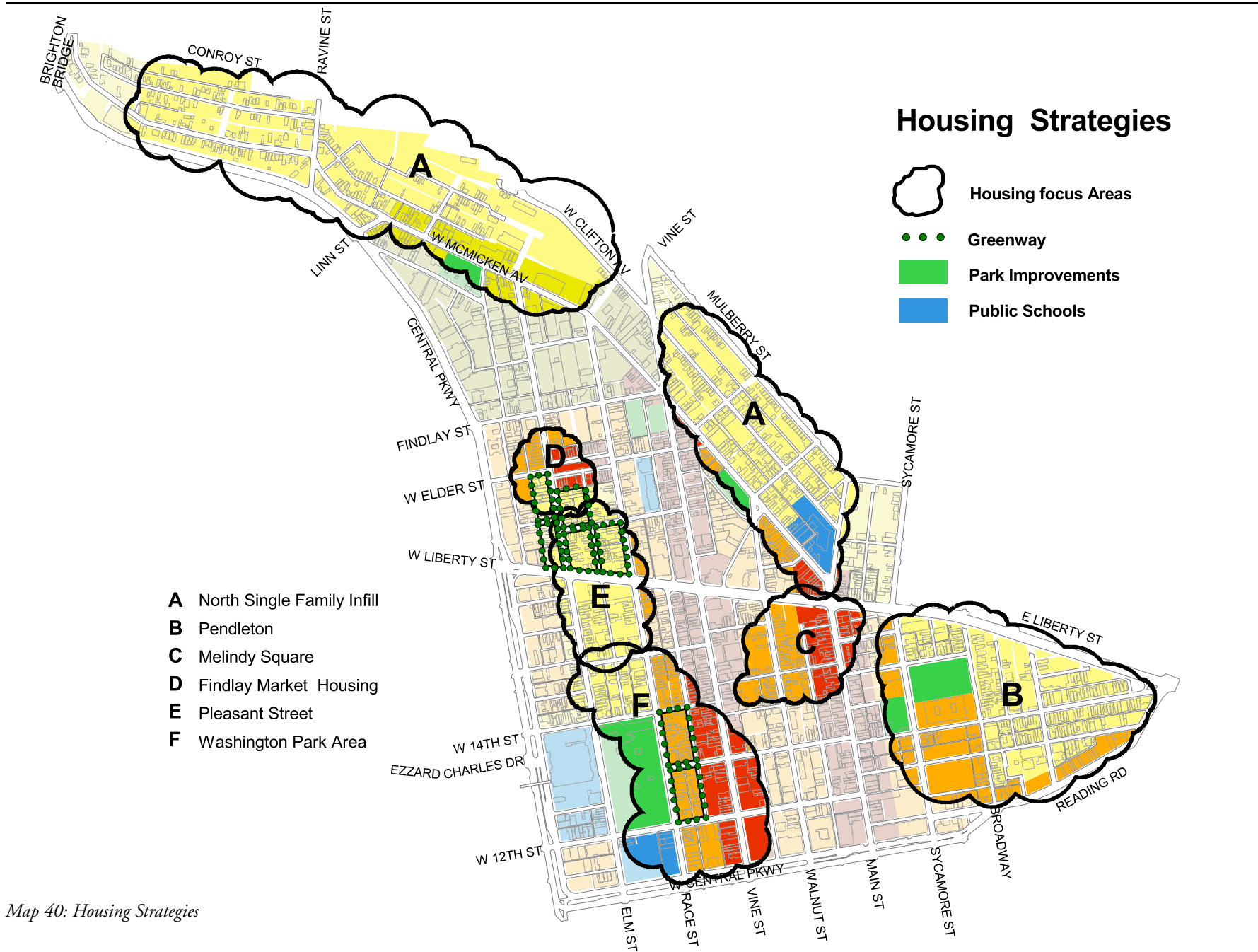
Objectives:

- Identify and market housing services available to residents of OTR
- Provide information on housing-related services
- Use the assets of residents in OTR to enhance economic vitality

Goal 3: Protect, preserve and enhance the significant landmarks and areas of OTR's historical, architectural and cultural heritage without displacement

Objectives:

- Encourage the continued identification and recognition of significant historic, architectural and cultural resources in OTR
- Assure that new construction, additions, alterations and demolitions within OTR are carried out in a manner that is not detrimental to the neighborhood or to its current and future residents
- Encourage the maintenance, rehabilitation and conservation of the existing housing stock to stabilize and strengthen the OTR community



Map 40: Housing Strategies

KEY HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

A Balanced Housing Stock

The key housing recommendation for OTR is the establishment of an equitable housing stock for a population of diverse incomes by 2020. Soliciting and supporting development and redevelopment that enables the OTR community to reach the following percentages by rental and mortgage costs can accomplish this.

Total Housing Units In Over-The-Rhine				
Rental or Mortgage Costs	1-5 Years	5 - 10 Years	10 - 15 Years	15 - 20 Years
Market Rate Housing				
Unlimited	20%	20%	20%	25%
61% to 100% of AMI (\$60,500 in 2001)	20%	20%	30%	25%
Affordable Housing				
31% to 60% of AMI (\$36,500 in 2001)	20%	35%	25%	25%
Up to 30% of AMI (\$18,150 in 2001)	40%	25%	25%	25%

Figure 41: Key Housing Strategy.

This model is based on the belief that an equitable community that welcomes new residents can be achieved without displacement of current residents and that every effort should be made to assist people in moving from one income level to another.

This recommendation is consistent with the recently approved impactation ordinance that declares the City's policy to target public resources to housing projects that do not create new low-income housing in neighborhoods that are already over saturated with affordable housing.

This affordability goal will be implemented as projects move forward and seek public assistance. In the short-term, projects that provide new higher income and mixed income units will be favored. As the proportion of affordable units begins to reach the identified percentages, additional affordable and mixed income units will need to be created. It will also be appropriate to continue to upgrade the existing affordable housing stock over the entire planning period.

A monitoring system will need to be established to provide an annual count of housing units. Both the University of Cincinnati and Xavier University have expressed an interest in conducting this monitoring. There are a number of national research projects currently underway that could accommodate this project.

Housing Production

A successful revitalization of the neighborhood is dependent, in large part, on the successful production of new housing and the rehabilitation of existing housing. The significant number of vacant buildings and the poor condition of much of the existing housing requires major improvements. Existing for-profit and not-for-profit developers will all play a role in stimulating the housing market to produce more units.



Figure 42: An example of a building renovated into Loft Housing. Photo courtesy of Urban Sites Property Management.

The implementation section outlines a number of strategies to help the development community increase production. These include:

- The City's involvement in site assembly and infrastructure improvements
- Funding through various existing programs
- New loan pool resource
- Capital support for specific projects
- Support for mixed income and reduced density tax credit projects

Specific Project Locations

There are many housing projects currently underway or in the planning stages in the community that meet the objectives described above. There are also additional projects recommended to continue to stimulate housing production in different parts of the neighborhood. The Housing Plan Map shows locations for future development.

Current projects include:

- 1300 Block of Vine Street (ReSTOC)
- Melindy Square
- Findlay Market/Elm Housing Project (Scheer and Scheer)
- Mercy Franciscan Housing Project at Republic and Green Streets
- Pendleton Mews
- 1200 Vine Housing/Parking Project
- Model Management Housing Rehabilitation at 1321-23-25 Vine Street, 1320-22 Republic Street and 1206-08 Clay Street
- Community Views rehabilitation at 122 and 232 E. Clifton Avenue, 223 Peete Street, 1639 Vine Street, 440 W. McMicken Avenue, and 154 E. McMicken Avenue.

Additional Project Recommendations include:

- Washington Park Area Project
- Rothenberg Area Infill
- Loft Housing
- Pleasant Street Housing Project

ReSTOC



Figure 43: A ReSTOC project in the 1300 block of Vine Street.

Findlay Market



Figure 44: View south over Findlay Market parking lot showing new housing clusters over underground parking. By Consultant - Design Team.

Model Management



Figures 45A-C: Model Management projects at 1206-08 Clay Street, 1323 Vine Street and 1321 Vine Street. Photos courtesy of Model Management.

Pleasant Street



Figure 46: View north over new and existing housing clusters on Pleasant Street. By Consultant - Design Team.

St. Anthony Village



Figure 47: A sketch of St. Anthony Village. This mixed-income development is located at Republic and Green Streets, and developed by Women's Research and Development Center. Sketch courtesy of the University of Cincinnati Community Design Center.

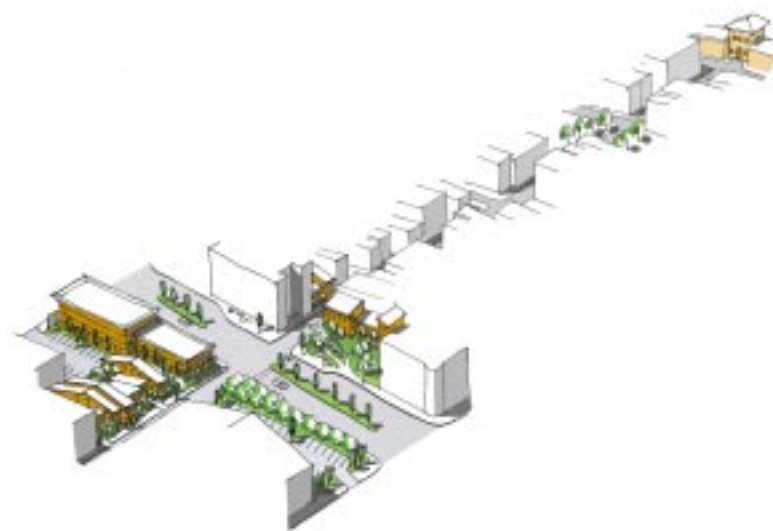


Figure 48: An illustration of proposed housing development on Pleasant Street near Liberty Street. Housing infill on tertiary streets such as Republic and Pleasant is reserved for 2 - 3 story single-family structures scaled in relation to existing buildings on the street. This is an example of clustered housing developed around a secure tenant controlled landscaped courtyard. By Consultant - Design Team.

Melindy Square



Figure 49: An illustration of the proposed Melindy Square Development showing parking lot landscape screening, green space and a transit stop. By Consultant - Design Team.

The Vine Street Gateway Project



Figures 50 A-B: The Vine Street Gateway Project. Located at the corners of Central Parkway, Vine Street, 12th Street, and Jackson Street. As currently designed, this is a four-story parking garage with mixed income, four-story housing along Vine Street. This is an opportunity to leverage new affordable mixed-income housing with the land being subsidized in a public-private partnership with corporate use of a parking garage, as well as the future Art Academy of Cincinnati and the Vine Street business district. Illustrations courtesy of Muller Architects.



Figure 51: Enhance residential spaces with an urban landscape of outdoor private spaces. Decks, balconies, and porches provide residents with much needed private space that also function to enliven and safeguard the semi-public space of courtyards, and the public space of alleys and streets. Privately maintained urban landscapes, including window boxes and stoop entry gardens, provide both beauty and a sense of ownership for the environment.

Housing infill on tertiary streets such as Republic and Pleasant is reserved for 2-3 story single-family structures, scaled to be related to the existing buildings on the street. With both an iron fenced front yard setback and side yard setback on the south side. Private parking may be accommodated at the side of the house or a garage may be situated at the rear with alley access. Alternatively, the house may have a front entry single bay garage with living space over, substituting for the side yard. New construction may require building 2 family buildings to provide the required scale for the neighborhood.

In all infill housing type configurations, back yards provide an opportunity for “cluster courtyards”, especially for the rear of multi-family buildings. The “mews” alley courts provide ideal individual rear yard configurations (with alley accessed parking) for single-family housing and combined rear yards for multi-family buildings. By Consultant - Design Team.



Figure 52: Commercial use concentration areas should never exclude and should incorporate upper level housing. The compatibility of uses should be a consideration in structuring the long-term viability of mixed-use commercial streets such as Vine Street.

Multi-family housing should be promoted above storefront commercial use on commercially designated streets in accordance with the mixed-use objective for OTR land use and accepted principles for maintaining vital urban street life.

Office use is more appropriate than residential use above storefront with/or adjacent to nighttime entertainment

Historic Preservation

Designating two new local historic districts – Over-the-Rhine (North) and Mohawk-Bellevue NBD – and the presence of the existing Over-the-Rhine (South) Local Historic District and the Over-the-Rhine National Register Historic District will cultivate community pride and an appreciation of the neighborhood’s rich past throughout the city. The specific conservation guidelines established for the local

districts will protect irreplaceable historic buildings and will encourage their conservation, renovation, and reuse. They will also advocate new development that is compatible with and will take advantage of each district’s unique character. As a result, each district will foster the continued viability of the community as an attractive place to live, work and play for citizens of all socio-economic levels.



Figure 53: Historic Districts in OTR.

Homeownership

Increasing homeownership opportunities as a means for stabilizing the community for all income groups is strongly desired. Active participation of neighborhood groups and organizations will be needed to identify and solicit residents who are interested in homeownership opportunities including services offered by the Homeownership Center. The Center is currently working with residents to provide Section 8 homeownership opportunities. Homeownership options in the parts of the neighborhood indicated in the future land use plan as being lower density are most appropriate.

Rental Housing

Rental housing will continue to be an important part of the housing in the neighborhood. Much of the current rental housing stock is in poor condition, but is providing limited housing choices for low-income residents. Keeping a healthy, solid, rental housing market available for people at all income levels is critical to keeping the neighborhood accessible and diverse. Rental units are indicated on the Future Land Use Map on page xiii in the medium-density locations.

Family Housing

Converting the smaller units into large, three-to-four-bedroom housing units that accommodate families is recommended for the areas around the schools and recreational sites. In particular, the housing stock surrounding Washington Park Elementary, Rothenberg Elementary, School for Creative and Performing Arts, and Findlay Market are very suitable for this type of development. Family housing should be provided in both owner and rental options.

Financial Support

1. Solicit participation in the **City's Housing Programs** for development and rehabilitation gap financing. Gap financing refers to the difference or "gap" between the private funding on appraised value and the target income market. Conventional lenders will provide only up to 75 or 80 percent of the appraised value. It can be difficult to close the gap between available and needed funding. Filling this gap will be critical to increasing housing production in the neighborhood. Currently, the City of Cincinnati has a number of competitive financing programs to assist housing development (See Appendix E for listing).
2. Support **Low Income Housing Tax Credit Projects** including mixed income projects consistent with the overall housing goals stated in the housing affordability plan. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit⁵ (LIHTC) Program created by Congress in 1986 has been instrumental in bringing investment to depressed areas such as OTR. An investor receives the housing tax credit each year for 10 years, and in return, the owner must maintain income and rent restrictions on a property for at least 15 years.

⁵ The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OFHA), within the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD), has administered the LIHTC Program since 1987 in the State of Ohio. OFHA awards the Housing Tax Credits to applicants on a competitive basis one or two times per year. The chief advantage of the LIHTC Program is that relatively great amounts of equity financing can be raised for low-income housing projects in depressed communities, thus enabling development of low-income housing that otherwise would not be feasible to provide.

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3. **Financial support for Non-profit Low-income Housing Groups** in OTR. Support for operations and maintenance costs is needed to continue to provide and increase the quality of housing for low-income residents.
 4. Create an **OTR loan fund**. The Cincinnati Development Fund has been established and capitalized to target resources for project development and production.
 5. **Land Assembly** - Remove buildings out of speculation and into active development by purchasing vacant land and buildings to accommodate large-scale development consistent with the surrounding environment.
 6. Investigate the feasibility of establishing a **Housing Trust Fund** for affordable housing by identifying potential sources of funds and operating agency. A Housing Trust Fund commits public sources of revenue to a dedicated, ongoing fund for housing. This fund could provide a dependable source of funding for the creation and maintenance of housing, homebuyer assistance, below-market rental housing, gap financing, start up funding for housing developers, and land acquisition and design costs.

Economic Empowerment

1. Provide **training** on home maintenance, rental management, buying a first home, and potential cooperative ownership structures. Coordinate with the Homeownership Center regarding existing programs.
2. Establish a **Land Trust**. A trust can acquire land that will be leased on a long-term basis to an individual whose home

will be located on the land. The resident will own the home and the organization will own the land. The trust limits and controls future use on the land.

Legislative Actions

1. **Covenants** that require proposed rent-restricted units to remain fixed for a 15-year period for the use of CDBG and HOME Funds.
2. Create **Local Historic Districts** north of Liberty Street and in the Mohawk area.
3. Establish a **Main Street Program** in mixed-use commercial/residential areas such as Vine and Main Streets. The Main Street Program is a national program that provides technical assistance for businesses concentrated in a particular area to organize and hire a business manager primarily for marketing purposes. Once established, the groups become financially responsible for cost for the manager and other activities.
4. Create **Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts**. The establishment of such as district allows for money that will be received from the anticipated increase in tax realized from improvement made in the district to be spent in OTR. We recommend that the funds generated from the TIF district be used for property acquisition and public infrastructure improvements recommended in this plan. Because TIF Districts are limited to 300 acres, two will be created for OTR.

Housing Support Services

1. All of the housing support services could be provided through a central clearinghouse that could serve as a **one-stop shop** within the community.
2. **Support organizations that** provide housing for both rent-restricted and market rate households.
3. Provide educational opportunities that focus on housing maintenance, how to identify and report housing violations, tenant/landlord rights, and economic incentives for historic preservation such as the Federal Historic Tax Credits.
4. **Create and maintain a database** of available housing units in OTR to track the availability of various types of housing.
5. Encourage local groups to create a unified housing marketing plan for the community.

PRIORITY HOUSING PROJECTS

The City is committed to the implementation of this Plan. The following projects are consistent with the Housing recommendations, are currently underway and are expected to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

Phase One Committed Projects Completed by the end of 2004

Complete Pendleton Mews (OTR Foundation- Verdin)

20 single-family homeownership units (17 market rate, 3 affordable)
City to furnish infrastructure improvements and streetscape enhancements

City investment: \$859,000

Private investment: \$2,900,000

Schedule to be determined

Complete Melindy Square (Miami Purchase Preservation – Urban Sites)

61 rehabilitated homeownership units, market rate

Project under review

Schedule to be determined

Complete 1200 Block of Vine Street

Rehabilitation of a series of buildings that will include up to 25 market rate housing units and commercial space. The project will be put out to bid by Cincinnati Development Fund (CDF) and also includes a number of private owners.

Investments and schedule to be determined

Model Management Tax Credit Project

Project to renovate buildings on Vine and Race and reduce the overall density of low-income units

24 affordable units

Project under review

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Community Views

15 efficiency to four bedroom units on scattered sites throughout Over-the-Rhine and Mohawk. (5 market rate, 10 affordable)

Project under review

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Complete 1300 Vine Street (ReSTOC)

30 rehabilitated, affordable rental units

City provided gap financing

City investment \$770,000

Other investment: \$3,675,000

Open 2003

East 15th Street Project

28 rehabilitated units, 5 affordable

City investment: \$69,900

Private investment: \$1,500,000

Open 2004

Complete Findlay Market Housing (Scheer and Scheer)

Rehabilitation of 10 homeownership units in 7 buildings and 4 market rate rental units in 1 building

City investment: \$1,072,523

Other investment \$2,780,000

Completion 2004

Miscellaneous Smaller Housing Projects

The city is working with a number of housing developers on approximately 8 other smaller housing projects including the Reading Lofts, Conroy Street, Park Hill, Mulberry Views, Christian Stollmaier Building, 13th Street, 1400 block of Walnut Street and Mercer Street. These projects include 53 additional units; 4 affordable

Total city investment: \$1,751,300

Total private investment: \$9,826,000

Total Housing Projects

Total city investment: \$4,922,000

Total private investment: \$23,581,000
